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DEPT FOR G/IWI, Andrea Bottner and AF/W

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SUBJECT: FREETOWN NOMINATION: 2008 SECRETARY'S AWARD
FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE

REF: (A) STATE 037570, (B) STATE 23653, (C) STATE 12871, (D) STATE
126072

¶1. Embassy Freetown is pleased to nominate Sierra Leone's Chief Electoral Commissioner, Dr. Christiana Thorpe, for the 2008 Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage. We believe

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Dr. Thorpe has shown exceptional courage and leadership throughout her career, most especially during the 2007 national elections, and that she has directly contributed to the advancement of women and the promotion of women's rights in Sierra Leone. Below is the requested information.

¶2. Full Legal Name: Dr. Christiana Ayoka Mary Thorpe

¶3. Current Job Title/Association: Chief Electoral Commissioner of the National Electoral Commission (NEC)

¶4. Date of Birth: August 16, 1949

¶5. Country of Birth: Sierra Leone

¶6. Citizenship: Sierra Leonean

¶7. Address: National Electoral Commission, 15 Industrial Estate Wellington, Freetown, Sierra Leone

¶8. Telephone: +232-22-76-611-525

¶9. Email: christiana_thorpe@yahoo.com

¶10. Passport Number: Sierra Leone S003583

¶11. Detailed Justification:

As Chief Electoral Commissioner and Chairman of the National Electoral Commission (NEC), the independent entity charged with managing all aspects of Sierra Leone's elections, Dr. Thorpe ensured that Sierra Leone's recently concluded 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, the first civilian-led elections since the 10-year civil war ended in 2002, were credible, democratic, and transparent. Dr. Thorpe was appointed as the Chair of NEC in 2005 and her tenure to date has been no less than outstanding and courageous.

Although she came under tremendous pressure from those in power, Dr. Thorpe steadfastly refused to compromise her belief that free and democratic elections must be a cornerstone of Sierra Leone's growth. As Sierra Leoneans eagerly awaited the electoral results, which ultimately brought the opposition All People's Congress (APC) into power on September 17, 2007, Dr. Thorpe became the target of increasing threats and scurrilous media attacks meant to scare her away from upholding the credibility of the process and exposing

fraud at the ballot box. Courageously, in the face of personal danger, she refused to be intimidated. By doing so, she ensured that the voice of Sierra Leoneans was heard and guaranteed a peaceful transition of authority from one political party to another.

Dr. Thorpe received accolades from Sierra Leoneans, political parties, elections observers and the international community for her steadfast contributions to leading war-torn Sierra Leone further along the path of democracy and stability. Her quiet strength and impartial determination throughout the elections has become a beacon for all Sierra Leoneans to move forward together in unity. Perhaps, most importantly, her leadership has inspired all Sierra Leoneans to respect the important contributions of women, not only within Sierra Leone, but throughout Africa and the world.

Dr. Christiana Thorpe's entire career has illustrated her dedication to the advancement of women. She began her professional career as a teacher and principal. Recognizing the need to address the high number of girls leaving school early, Dr. Thorpe became involved in promoting the advancement of women in her school and local community. She worked with grassroots women's groups to improve literacy among women, to promote self-worth among girls, and to sensitize women to their civic and moral duties. In 1993, she became a member of the Basic Education Secretariat in the Department of Education, where she developed and advocated for a new system of education that encouraged the education of all children - male and female. Because of her outstanding work on the Secretariat, she was appointed the Under Secretary of Education in 1994 and elevated to Minister of Education in 1995, serving as the only women minister in a cabinet of 19. As Minister of Education, she continued to promote girls' education. In 1995, Dr. Thorpe also launched the Sierra Leone chapter of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE).

FAWE works to support women and girls in their efforts to gain an education. In Sierra Leone, FAWE has provided girls' with school scholarships, established girls' clubs that promote self-esteem, and provided life-skills training to young mothers. Under Dr. Thorpe's leadership as Chairperson, FAWE membership in Sierra Leone has

surpassed 1,000 members and reaches every district of the country.

For her unswerving and courageous loyalty to women, the ideals of democracy and the development of Sierra Leone, Embassy Freetown firmly believes that Dr. Thorpe deserves to be recognized as an International Woman of Courage.

¶12. Dr. Christiana Thorpe was notified of this nomination on September 15, 2007.

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